The presence of DON BOSCO among his boy’s

***Rahul is nervous, his chest number is about to be announced. He is upset because his father has not come to hear his speech or to support him. His chest number is announced, with shivering hands he goes to the stage and looks at the audience with fear. Audience becomes restless as the boy doesn’t speak anything. But then comes Rahul’s father running, Rahul sees him behind the audience sharing gestures of good luck. Rahul’s confidence level goes up. He puts on the mic.***

***Good evening respected fathers and brothers. This beautiful evening, I am so glad to share with you some reflection on the topic*** “***THE PRESENCE OF DON BOSCO AMONG HIS BOYS”***

In a family the parents are always with their children, parents are physically present with their children for making them grow up as good citizens for their mental and physical growth; and so, as sons of Don Bosco our presence should address the needs of the young who are poor and abandoned. Don Bosco looked after the boys of his time. It was not a simple presence. But it was something special.

According to me in DON BOSCO’S Presence can be abbreviated into following ways: ***“P” stands for “Plan”*** A Salesian should be a man of planning, he should have a plan of what he is about to do. ***“R” stands for “Responsibility”.*** A Salesian should be Responsible for the work he has taken upon and should exalt it for God’s glory ***“E” stands for Enthusiasm*** A Salesian does not do things for the sake of doing but he does it with enthusiasm, because his founder did it that way. ‘***S” stands for self-sacrifice.*** A Salesian makes his life meaningful by making sacrifice for his community as well as by saving souls. ***“E” stands for an Educator*** A Salesian should be an educator; whatever he learned during his formation is not for him but for his boys well fear. ***“N” stands for Nation.*** A Salesian forms a youngster not only by keeping his aptitudes growing but should make out of him an upright citizen. ***“C” stands for Cheerfulness***. A Salesian saint is not a sorry saint, he should be cheerful in whatever he does and he should impart his cheerfulness to others. ***“E” stands for Encouragement.*** A Salesian should be a man of encouragement and he never lets people down with his way of dealing but gives a positive stroke to them.

DON BOSCO from his own life shows us the effectiveness of presence which worked effectively among his friends. “One afternoon he came home with blood all over his face. His mother was very sad and angry; she asked John “why do you go with those boys.”? You know that some of them are little rascals.” Then Johnny replied “I won’t go any more if you wish. But mamma, when I am with them, they do not use certain words.”

In the beginning of the oratory Fr. Lemoyne use to say that DON BOSCO ran his oratory as a father ran his family. DON BOSCO spent time with his boys whenever he could. “I cannot live without my boys”, he would say; only very grave reasons would prevent him from being away in their midst, talking with them, playing with them for quite some time, he would be there in their study hall, not for want of assistant but he felt that his presence among his boys, would make in them some changes in their life.

When we reflect upon the presence of Don Bosco among his boys, we understand the deep meaning of it. Don Bosco’s educative system has a fundamental point of daily presence among youth; what we call according to our tradition assistance. This does not mean the charity of a benefactor who provides means and resources from a distance, but the love of one who is willing to accompany with his boys, to live in their midst with them and for them following the example of Don Bosco.

For Don Bosco, assistance meant 24x7 presences among the boys. This presence cannot be nullified with its single meaning. But it has volumes to speak about its depth. In the first-place presence meant- ***PHYSICAL PRESENCE*.** Don Bosco was present among young people and hence a real sharing took place in their life as well in their interests. Once Don Bosco told Don Rua, “For goodness’s sake never leave the boys to themselves; keep an eye on them always and everywhere.” Hence, all the Salesian are obliged to be present among the young people entrusted to their assistance

In the second-place presence meant- ***BROTHERLY FRIENDSHIP.*** Don Bosco told, “It is not only enough that we love boys but they should feel that they are loved by us”. The BROTHERLY FRIENDSHIP of Don Bosco was very much evident in his way of dealing with Bartholomew Garelli, the little barber Charles Gustini, Rua etc. Throughthe example of these boys, we are able to find how much Don Bosco loved his boys and the how much the boy’s considered Don Bosco as their father, brother and a very good friend.

In the third-place presence meant- ***ACTIVE PRESENCE***. In the mind of Don Bosco, a Salesian should not show a sorry figure in front of his boys. He should be active in his field. He should work with his boys, play with the boys and should enjoy whatever his boys enjoy. Don Bosco said, “those who are too old to play either cheer the players or encourage their efforts, or walk around with those boys who for some reason or other cannot join in the games.” Thus, he should make his active presence felt among them.

In the fourth-place presence meant- ***ANIMATING PRESENCE*.** It develops motivations based on reason and faith, at the same time strengthens the youngster’s response to the demands of values and principles. Looking to Don Bosco’s oratory we can see the exemplary animating work that Don Bosco did. It was evident in the oratory activities especially in the fields of music, theater, and outings. In short, the outcome of Don Bosco’s animating presence was to make his boys good citizens for the society. This enabled the young to organize and animate programs even when Don Bosco was not in their midst.

***Lastly, the witnessing presence.***

People would say that Don Bosco spoke to them as if they were his best friends, and so they were able to be his best friends. Thus, they were able to experience the love of God, who loves each one of us as if only we are there in the world. Bartholomeo Garelli must have had witnessed His presence deeply, migrating from a place he might have felt lonely and abandoned but through Don Bosco, he experienced the love and care of God.

All these nuances of Salesian presence point out to us that this presence matters and it matters the most. An educator should consecrate his life to the welfare of his children and should always be with them. Likewise, Salesians should always be with their children says Don Bosco and care should be taken that children are never alone. We should be among them. They should cherish our presence and should not curse it. They should know that by being with them we are interested in them and we love them. Thus, we should make our presence beautiful and meaningful.

Dear friends,

Tomorrow we are going to be assistants, and we should be present with the boys 24 hours—that is our mission. We should not make any compromise in that. If you feel any kind of laxity, take the letter from Rome of in the year 1884 read it once or twice, get frightened by that dream and make changes. Because, presence matters. As we feel God’s presence let the boys too feel His presence through us. Like Don Bosco, let us be signs of the presence of God and a present to others and take souls to heaven.

Thank you

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